ArtWorks NE
Peer Artist Learning project report

Contents

"In our consumer culture many of us have been claimed by heritage, spectacle and novelty. So in this unsettling time of enforced hysteria it could be useful to lay down the initial ground rules of a culture which may be less materially based but where more people will actively participate and gain the power to rejoice in moments that are wonderful and significant. These could be where more us grow our own food and maybe build our own houses, name our children and bury our dead, mark anniversaries, create new spaces for new ceremonies and produce whatever dramas, stories, rituals, images, pageants and jokes that are relevant to re-discovered values.

"In such a context an artist will become facilitator and fixer, celebrant and stage manager, a visionary linking the past and the future, and a shamanic poet, the revelator of layers of perception and the holder of what used to be called spiritual energy. Equally of course this kind of artist would also acknowledge the artist in us all and offer testament to the innate creativity recurring in every generation and every community where the intuitive is given freedom. Where regeneration is of the soul and not of economics. Where a holistic way of being is given credence and where making art is a daily experience."

(John Fox 2009)

From 'A New Role for The Artist' in 'New Ground, Lost Seeds'

1   Introduction

This report sets out the process and findings of the Peer Artist Learning project2012, commissioned by University of Sunderland for ArtWorks NE, as part of Paul Hamlyn Foundation's ArtWorks project. It has been a thoroughly rewarding project, not without its challenges, but providing a fantastic opportunity to bring together 35 of the NE region's artists, from a range of disciplines and backgrounds, to reflect on the themes of the ArtWorks project, and to have their experiences and their perspectives heard and accounted in designing future training to support the development of the workforce of artists working in Participatory Arts settings in the NE. The engagement of the artists in this process has been very strong, and it has revealed a very high level of interest and engagement by the artistic community, in addressing the question of how to support the development of the Participatory Arts workforce in the region.

The project set out a series of structured opportunities for artists of more or less experience of facilitating Participatory Arts activities to reflect with their peers on their experiences, in pairs, and in small and large groups. Supported by personal documentation of their experiences through reflective journal-keeping, the artists involved identified a number of 'critical factors' which they believe should inform future training design. These included contextual / pedagogical skills such as facilitating and working with groups of participants, and knowledge about what constitutes 'quality' in Participatory Arts practice, as well as the knowledge and application of particular theoretical frameworks and perspectives.

They also identified a range of personal skills and qualities which they considered to have been significant in their own development as professionals, including personal qualities of passion, commitment and professionalism as well as good business skills, a strong Artistic practice and the capacity to manage complex issues of ownership and control between themselves as artists, and the various groups of participants, stake-holders, commissioners, agencies and funders involved in the work.

The training process of individual reflective journal-keeping, alongside structured coaching and mentoring, and group Training / Development Days enabled a variety of dialogues to occur, resulting in a very rich set of data around the themes of the research questions, shown at 7.3. The data has been collated and summarised using a 'living' Prezi document which all participants have contributed to, as a means of keeping a record of the emergent themes and complex dialogues without reducing them to simpler forms, and enabling future review as the ArtWorks project develops.

Dave Camlin, Head of Professional Learning, The Sage Gateshead

July 2012

2   What did the project set out to do?

2.1   Aims

The Peer Artist Learning project aimed to "set up situations [between artists with more or less experience of delivering participatory Arts activity] where learning can take place through learning conversations." The project set out to pair artists with more experience of Participatory Arts practice to have 'focused conversations' (Stanfield 2000) about their professional journeys, and "to critically explore the dimensions of participatory work and its many facets." Each more experienced artist was then paired with another artist with less experience of Participatory Arts practice to have coaching-style dialogues following Sir John Whitmore's 'GROW' process (Whitmore 2009). The results of these conversations were intended to "inform the way we value mentoring, co-mentoring and peer learning as learning tools in the context of artist development," as well as providing insights into the kinds of training which would best support artists wishing to develop their Participatory practice.

2.2   Caution owing to timescale

We recognised from the outset that "because of the time constraints of this project, it is in some ways more akin to a learning exchange between individuals (phase 1) or a targeted coaching intervention (phase 2) rather than an authentic 'mentoring' experience." We were unsure whether the shortened time-frame (5 months overall) would be sufficient for participants to derive significant learning from the process. Our previous experience of facilitating reflective co-mentor training (Renshaw & Smith 2008; Renshaw 2008; Renshaw & Smith 2010; Renshaw 2010; Renshaw 2011) had led us to structuring other similar training around a 12-18 month time-frame. Hence:

> "We have exercised caution in referring to this project as 'mentoring' as the short term nature and pre-determined focus of the enquiry sit outside our understanding of the definition of that term. Likewise, although there is clearly an Action Learning process in operation overall, we should be careful not to describe the co-mentors' experiences as being veritable 'Action Learning' as, although we hope there will be indirect measurable benefits to participants' practice as a result of participation, there is no explicit expectation that they will apply the learning arising from their paired learning exchanges *directly* back into their own practice."

3   What happened?

Our worries about the efficacy of the project over a compressed time-frame were largely unfounded. Participants did feed back strongly that the time-frame posed significant challenges for them, but their commitment to the process was such that for the most part, these challenges were overcome. The quality and richness of learning reported far exceeded our expectations, and the emergent and diverse 'community of practice'(Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999) which revealed itself through the various reflective dialogues was illuminating, to say the least (see 4).

3.1   Recruitment

We accepted a total of 35 artists (88% of target) by open application to the project, 18 with more experience of working in participatory settings ('experienced' artists), and 17 who were new to working in participatory settings ('emerging' artists). Prospective participants were required to submit a written application outlining their interest in the project and their previous experience, along with a short CV. Appendix 7.1 shows the pairings of these two groups, with one more experienced artist unpaired, who still elected to contribute to the process through the training / development days. 100% of participants were retained for the duration of the course.

3.1.1 Experienced Artist applications

Successful applications to be part of the Peer Artist Learning project were from across multiple disciplines:

- Animation (1)
- Cross-Arts (1)
- Dance (2)
- Music (2)
- Photography (1)
- Theatre (2)
- Visual Arts (6)
- Writing (3)

Artists came from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and a multiplicity of Participatory Arts practice.

3.1.2 Emerging Artist applications

Similarly, successful applications to be part of the project were from across multiple disciplines:

- Animation (2)
- Cross-Arts (1)
- Dance (1)
- Music (3)
- New Media (1)
- Photography (1)
- Theatre (2)
- Visual Arts (6)

The range of applicants included some very experienced people from diverse fields who had recently either made the move to engage in another art form or into participatory arts practice for the first time, thus challenging the stereotype of an emerging artist as a young, newly qualified graduated. In general, there appeared to be a lack of acknowledgement of transferability of skills gained in previous roles / jobs in relation to mentoring.

Some artists were interested in the impact of the project primarily on their artistic practice. Accordingly, during induction and initial training and meetings, a strong emphasis was placed on the need to focus on artists' participatory practice. Emerging artists were informed (and mentors reminded) that engagement in the project/pairing with a mentor would not focus on upskilling their personal arts practice but on identifying and ultimately enhancing their participatory arts practice skills.

3.2 Training / Development days

The project was structured around a total of 4 training / development days for participants:

- 17th January 'Experienced' artists' training day:
  - Introduction to the project, expectations, roles and responsibilities etc.
  - training in how to have a 'focused conversation' (Stanfield 2000)
- 23rd March Development Day involving both 'experienced' and 'emerging' artists
  - Review of 'experienced' artists' focused conversations
  - Identification of emergent 'critical factors' informing progression and training in participatory arts, from the experience of the 'experienced' artists
  - Introductions between 'experienced' and 'emerging' artist pairings

- introduction to GROW (Whitmore 2009) coaching framework
- 27th April 'Emerging' artists' Development Day
  - Reflection on the coaching process and issues arising
- 25th May Final Sharing Day involving both 'experienced' and 'emerging' artists
  - Review of the process, refinement of 'critical factors', 'open space' conversations around emergent themes

Overall, the Training / Development Days proved invaluable as opportunities to review the process and learn from participants how the project was working, and what improvements could be made. Significantly, it also gave the project as a whole a very valuable opportunity to initiate a dialogue with a very diverse 'community' of practitioners around the research questions, and to establish some kind of consensus in response to those questions. At 4.2 we discuss some of the key issues that this raised in terms of the relationship between the project's process, and the emergent and dynamic nature of the practices involved, and the diversity and range of the various artistic perspectives.

Furthermore, the days provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences in more creative ways. For the Final Sharing Day, participants were invited to contribute content to the day, and a number of artists were keen to contribute activities and creative processes for their peers, including:

- 'live' performances of {improvised} music, dance and interactive 'mark-making' by audience
- Interactive graph-making and diagram construction
- A short film

Feedback from participants (e.g. "I loved seeing other people's responses") suggests that creating the space for this kind of artistic response to the themes and questions of the research is invaluable and validates their experience as artists.

3.3   Experienced artist paired 'focused conversations'

Each 'experienced' artist was paired with another from the cohort of 'experienced' artists, and set the task of meeting as a pair 6 times over the course of the project, using the methodology of 'focused conversation' (Stanfield 2000) to reflect together on their professional journeys and the critical factors which had informed their professional development.

3.4   Experienced / emerging artist coaching conversations

Each 'experienced' artist was then paired with an 'emerging' artist, and set the task of having 3 structured coaching-style conversations, using John Whitmore's GROW framework. (Whitmore 2009) Each 'emerging' artist therefore had the opportunity to:

- Set **GOALS** - discuss practical and achievable targets for the development of their professional practice in participatory settings
- View their aspirations against a more objective perception of the **REALITY** of their professional experience.
- Agree a number of **OPTIONS** to support their development towards their goals
- Identify practical actions which they can apply their **WILL** to.

3.5   Journals

100% of 'experienced' artists and 94% of 'emerging' artists involved in the project kept a reflective journal of their involvement (97% of total), and many of these were highly detailed and reflective (over 12,000 words in some instances). We believe that not only is this statistically significant, but it is also an indication of the strength of commitment and interest in the subject on the part of the participating artists. It is not

possible to do full justice to the breadth and richness of these reflective accounts in a brief report, but we believe that the volume and rich detail of these responses warrants further study to elicit more comprehensive understanding of the project and its processes. We believe very strongly that the success of this reflective approach in supporting artists to contextualise their experiences with a peer should inform the design of future training opportunities (see 5.2).

3.5.1 Means of documentation

Most pairs chose to keep separate journals, and keep an independent record of their experience. They chose for themselves the extent to which they wished to share their reflective processes with their partner, the rest of the group and more publicly, with some keeping their journals fairly close to themselves, and others engaging in a public reflective dialogue.

3.5.2 Creative Responses

Perhaps not surprisingly, as the participating artists were all from creative backgrounds, some artists responded to the process in more creative ways, engaging in the opportunity to reflect on their own or with a peer in ways which arose naturally from their artistic practice:

- "walking on the beaches in Northumberland. .. take photographs and weave these in to the story of our meetings... and perhaps use them in the final presentation."
- A Wordpress site set up by two artists from the 'experienced' group: http://peerartistlearning.wordpress.com
- A Powerpoint presentation consisting of evaluative analysis using Edward de Bon's '6 Thinking Hats' method and reflections
- A variety of visual responses
- Photographs and animations

3.6 Living document

As early as the recruitment phase of the project, the richness and diversity of the many perspectives of the different artists involved was clearly apparent, as well as the sometimes contradictory nature and viewpoints of those perspectives. For example, some artists responded to the process by developing conceptual frameworks and draft taxonomical models to conceptualise the work. Other artists reacted strongly against such conceptualisation, and felt that any move to reduce the work to more convenient 'labels' fundamentally challenged its rich and evolving nature. An important part of the overall group process was affording these different perspectives space to be heard, without judgement or censorship. We feel strongly that the dialectical nature of the group experience is an important feature to account, not just for this project, but more generally in accounting for the artist's voice within broader debate on policy and the development of Participatory Arts practice.

Accordingly, we set out to represent the emerging themes arising from the project in the form of an interactive zooming presentation on www.prezi.com which can be found here. Following the 'experienced' artists' Development Day, the views and thoughts of the artists were uploaded, including a summary of the 'critical factors' which they had agreed via group consensus were the most important issues to consider in terms of understanding professional progression in Participatory Practice. During the Final Sharing Day, both groups of artists collaborated via an 'Open Space' (Owen 2008) style group conversation to refine these 'critical factors' into the current iteration, shown on the Prezi and listed briefly here at 4.1.1. The Prezi document has been left as a 'living' document i.e. it might change as the various contributors change or refine their own perspectives on their experiences of the work. Editing access has been given to the artists involved so that they can amend and / or edit their contributions. As we will go on to explain at

, because participatory work is fundamentally dialogical (Freire 1970; Linden & Renshaw 2010) in its nature, and because the work itself is evolutionary and emergent, and subject to change as the communities involved change, it is consistent and appropriate to set these themes as a 'work-in-progress' that others can refine, change, challenge or reject.

4 What did we learn?

A very important point to note is the very high level of engagement with the project by the participating artists, as evidenced by the detailed reflective journals they produced. The question of training and professional development of artists working in participatory settings is something that drew very high levels of personal motivation, passion and opinion from the participants. It is clearly an area that artists working in the field have strong opinions about, and many of those participating in the project gave very strong views about their ongoing involvement in the ArtWorks project, and were very keen to be kept informed of any future developments. There is a significant amount of good will and interest from the participating artists in seeing the development of professional routes into the sector, and their opinions, thoughts and ideas should clearly inform the kinds of training developed over the course of the rest of the ArtWorks project.

Many artists working in the field reported high levels of professional isolation, and recognised and welcomed the value of training which helped them to contextualise their own practice within a broader community. Important learning was therefore derived not just from the outcomes and insights arising from the various structured reflective dialogues which occurred, but also from the process of those various dialogues. The artist / practitioner 'voice' is a key informant to the design of future training, but the diversity of the many different and individual perspectives involved is always bound to be something that eludes absolute definition or rigid conceptualisation. We believe that this project provided an opportunity for the various perspectives of the participating artists to be shared and accounted.

If it is possible to consider the diversity of these practices and approaches as constituting some kind of 'community of practice,' (Lave & Wenger 1991) then it is an evolving, organic and emergent one, which changes with its constituent population, their artistic concerns and interests, and the participant communities they engage with through the work. Induction into this 'community' through training needs to be done in such a way which recognises the fundamentally temporal, emergent and evolutionary nature of the practices, and prepares potential new 'community' members for involvement in such a dynamic professional environment. The training processes involved in the Peer Artist Learning project (coaching, mentoring, dialogue, consensus) provide some insights into the kind of training most pertinent to the induction of artists in professional participatory practice, and accordingly, we summarise the learning from the project in terms of insights into the content of potential future training, as well as the training processes themselves.

4.1 Content

4.1.1 Critical Factors

Through structured dialogue and activity over the course of the training / development days, the project revealed a number of issues that participants considered to be 'critical factors' for consideration in any future training. Broadly, these might be categorised in three areas: knowledge and skills pertaining to the specific context of Participatory Arts practice; the personal qualities and skills required to operate effectively as practitioners in

participatory settings; thoughts and reflections on the kinds of training opportunities which will best support progression into the sector.

4.1.1.1 Contextual / Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills
Particular skills and knowledge required to operate as an artist in participatory settings:

4.1.1.1.1 Understanding how groups work
Group management / leadership skills including:
- the importance of setting clear contracts,
- maintaining consistent professional boundaries
- Having the personal capacity for developing relational trust
- Being able to read groups objectively and not 'take it personally'.
- Knowing when to be more directive, and when more delegatory (cf. Situational Leadership (Hersey 1997))
- Being clear with the group (and oneself) about what decisions they can be involved in – how much is fixed? How much is fluid? What's negotiable? What isn't?
- Knowing how to make activities 'inclusive' and accessible
- Understanding what makes an activity stimulating or engaging for a particular group

4.1.1.1.2 Quality
Being able to articulate what qualities your work is evoking, and whose standards / values are being applied:
- Understanding what constitutes 'quality' and how you measure and value it
- What quality is being valued? Process? Product? Access? Excellence? Professionalism? The art produced might be a by-product to the real work! – unless it's a permanent piece of work set in public.
- How do you define quality? In workshops or in learning activity evaluate i.e. verbally or by using written evaluations which can be used as a tool for deciding on future workshops.
- Trust that you know yourself when it's good… past experience.
- Learning from failure. Fail, Fail, Fail again Fail better. Fall and get up and enjoy – reaching deeper.
- The importance of reflection
- Do you evaluate yourself or get someone else to do it if so … who?
- Levels of quality and meaning. Participants vs. Outcomes.

4.1.1.1.3 Theories, Frameworks and Resources
During the Final Sharing Day, participants were asked to suggest any theories, frameworks, or resources which they felt were useful in terms of their own understanding of the work. This resulted in a brief list of a number of useful web resources:

- Air (AN) Guides
- Artists in Creative Education (A:CE) handbook (downloadable) on line for artists wanting to work in schools (across Europe) bits are good … http://artistsincreativeeducation.com
- Community Dance Foundation website! http:/communitydance.org.uk
- Law works – a website directs you to free law advice to non- profit organisations/ charities http://lawworks.org.uk
- Regular marvels http://regularmarvels.com

Alongside the theoretical model of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1987; Maslow 2011), a number of other pertinent texts (Lewis et al. 2001; Arnstein 1969; Arts Council England 2010; Revans 1983; Hart 1997; Tuckman 1965; Kolb 1983; Robinson 2001; Bishop 2006; Jackson 2011; Stewart & Joines 1987; Robinson 1982; Robinson & Aronica 2010; Ball 2008; Schön 1984; Berne 1973), are listed in the Resources section of this report.

4.1.1.2   Personal Skills and Qualities

Participants felt strongly that as well as context-specific teaching / facilitation skills, there were a set of skills which related to personal qualities and attributes which supported the individual to be able to operate effectively within the sector, and which should therefore be priorities for training:

4.1.1.2.1   Business Skills

The practical day-to-day skills of running a commercial enterprise principally, but not exclusively, as an independent freelance artist, including:

- Incorporation and business set-up - Social Enterprises, collectives, Community Interest Companies (CIC)
- Fund-raising
- Showing work
- Becoming known
- Marketing and advertising
- Self employment – tax – nuts and bolts of it.

4.1.1.2.2   Control and Ownership

Participants had a lot to say on this particularly complex subject, citing being able to preserve one's own artistic identity in the face of many competing demands for 'ownership' as a crucial factor in maintaining one's professional integrity, and preserving one's reputation, whilst at the same recognising the tension between 'owning' a process, and facilitating the 'ownership' of the process by the participants.

- Understanding the complexities and vagaries of control and ownership: taking ownership from commissioners / funders, as well as facilitating participant ownership when appropriate.
- "Inhabiting the liminal space between funders and participants" (Annie Bromley 2012)
- Having more input to the aims and structure of work
- Making work your own identity as an artist and transfer/ feed into work.
- There is no them. There are lots of thems – L.A, A.C.E, A. Agencies etc. Community groups.

More broadly, participants also raised the issue of the need to raise the professionalism of the Artist alongside other more recognised professions e.g. "I practice like you practice other disciplines (Law, Medicine, Healthcare etc.) but 'Artist/ Writer' isn't perceived to be on the same level."

4.1.1.2.3   Artistic Practice

Related to this was the absolute central importance of maintaining one's own Artistic practice:

- Time and support to do this (e.g. in H.E.)
- Discipline – take time to do it.
- Time management – too much, too little.
- Membership of groups/ networks/ affiliations that affirm you as 'artist'
- External verification important – for own self worth and for worthiness with participants and it impresses funders.

In contradiction to this majority perspective, some artists present felt strongly that Participatory practice should be recognised **as** Artistic practice in its own right, that the separation of Participatory practice from one's own Artistic practice was artificial. Although this perspective wasn't discussed in detail during the project, it clearly raises some interesting contradictions that we feel are worth exploring further, and which chime with John Fox' vision of the Artist as "facilitator and fixer, celebrant and stage manager, a visionary linking the past and the future, and a shamanic poet, the revelator of layers of perception and the holder of what used to be called spiritual energy." (Fox 2009)

4.1.1.2.4 Personal Qualities

Again, connected to this perspective of the importance of the artist's voice as being instrumental in setting appropriate contexts for the work, a number of personal qualities were identified as being important to an artist's full actualisation in Participatory settings, including:

- Passion
- Confidence
- Professionalism
- Flexibility
- Selflessness
- An 'appropriate' level of ego
- You have to like being with people, be excited about it and know that the journey is one of learning for you too
- Respect for yourself and all participants
- Core skills – transferable qualities which can be applied to various different areas. i.e. different artistic activities will have core skills in common.

Some participants talked about this set of qualities as an artist's 'shining core.'

4.1.1.3 Kinds of training

Perhaps not surprisingly, the artists present had strong opinions about the kinds of training that would be appropriate for artists working, or aspiring to work, in the sector. As mentioned previously, because the nature of Participatory Arts work is inherently 'dialogical', it's important that the kind of training offered to Artists is consistent with dialogical principles of learning, or as one participant put it, "there's a difference between teaching that's done to you rather than with you." Participants also recognised the importance of being self – motivated and active in terms of pursuing training, and stressed the importance of knowing what's out there, how to access it and having support to explore avenues.

4.1.1.3.1 Recognition of Participatory Practice within undergraduate study

A very strong point was made about the apparent disjunction between what undergraduates learn about Participatory Arts practice during their study, and what they need to function as professional artists post graduation with a

'protean' or 'portfolio' career. Obviously this is a much bigger issue than can be resolved here, and represents a significant challenge for Higher Education in general. Amongst current students, recent graduates, and not-so-recent graduates, there was a general consensus that most undergraduates courses could have more (or at least some!) focus on Participatory Arts practice, in recognition of the increasing likelihood of professional artists needing to maintain a 'protean' portfolio of work involving some kind of teaching, in order to sustain a professional career. Participants would like to see more University-led initiatives for undergraduates to prepare them for a professional life post-graduation.

The importance of 'situating' (HE) learning inside the practices being learned about, rather than in 'ivory towers' removed from actual practices, was recognised as being essential to prepare undergraduates for employment post-graduation. Other work-based learning opportunities were identified as important as well, with Universities taking a central role in managing and disseminating information about employment in the sector e.g.
- Centralised resource on university website of internship and other opportunities
- Why don't universities set up a "business opportunities set up" Similar to fresher's week for new entrants – how to set things up for artists – business help/ opportunities.

4.1.1.3.2 Non-formal / informal / organic routes
Of equal importance was the recognition that accredited HE Routes are not, and should not, be the only way to access training. There are good examples of very successful unaccredited work-based training in the region (e.g. The Sage Gateshead's Traineeship, which has supported over 100 musicians into professional practice as 'musicians who also teach' since 2003.) The wealth of skills of practicing artists (even just those in the room!) was seen as an invaluable resource to support 'newcomers' into the Participatory Arts community, and chimes very strongly with Lave / Wenger's notions of Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger 1991) and more informal 'apprenticeship'-style learning opportunities for less experienced artists to 'learn by doing' (Kolb 1983; Boud et al. 1993) alongside more experienced artists.

- Shouldn't focus too much on H.E. Consider routes into participatory work from unqualified but skilled and experienced artists.
- Organic routes into this work. Is there a national combined arts network that participatory artists can tag onto? (Like MusicLeader?)
- What's there for people without HE qualifications? YTS? Accredited courses?

The success of the Peer Artist Learning project itself should be seen as a good example of this kind of process-based dialogic learning, capitalising on the skills and experiences of the artists in the sector who make up its professional 'core'.

4.1.1.3.3 Short focused courses
Participants made the point that any future training should be just that - not long and costly H.E. programmes of study, but short, to the point, and cost effective. A number of examples of courses of specific interest were raised e.g.

P.A. Mechanics. It was felt that existing training providers with a proven track record - e.g. ENYAN, Artswork, Artsplan – could be used to deliver workshops in Participatory Arts practice.

4.2   Process

Alongside the practical training needs identified, we feel that it is important to account for the kind of training process which participants responded to, and which should inform future course design.

4.2.1   Importance of time and space for structured reflection with other artists

Many participants fed back how valuable the time and space for structured reflection was in supporting them to develop insights into themselves, their practice, the practices of others and the sector in general. Participants were asked what factors, if any, do you think contributed to the overall effectiveness of the ArtWorks NE Peer Artist Learning programme? Comments included:

- Flexibility in subjects and how pairings and individuals meet/ present/ produce findings.
- Well facilitated.
- Loose format.
- Facilitators experience and variety of artists and their experience.
- Great tools such as ORID / GROW
- Lovely freedom to talk/ reflect about process/ ideas experiences.
- A well thought through process. I liked the period of time to reflect get to know 'peer' artist and mentee with a cross over period.
- pushing us in the right directions
- very good to talk with someone from a different org / arts practice
- a very positive process
- unique time and space to have a reflective conversation
- Mix of artist, group discussions – set topics.
- Dedicated time and motivation for self-reflection and sharing personal journey with another practitioner.
- I have enjoyed engaging more fully with my participatory practice.
- Time to reflect on own practice.
- 'reflecting back' to us gives us more of a sense of trust and confidence in our own practice

They also cited the diversity of the wider group of artists as having a positive impact on their learning:

- People willing to learn with and from each other.
- Good range of Art Practitioners sharing a wealth of experience and knowledge about arts in participatory settings.
- Networking and discussions with other artists.
- The ideas put forward should help future generations of artists.
- Diversity of group.
- The members of the programme, their dedication to explore this fascinating and vital area of the arts.
- Such a rich mixture of artists.
- Group activity – interaction.
- You have amazingly talented and experience people in one room – with plenty to say and not afraid to say it.

- Room for more discussion about the influence on the course.

4.2.2 Value of mentoring / coaching

Participants cited the specific skills and approach contained within the mentoring / coaching elements of the project as significant:

- I loved the mentoring and got so much from that process. It has made a big difference to my work.
- Deep trust in a short amount of time - as artists and people
- The process on reflecting with mentors is invaluable and informative.
- Good co-mentoring pairing – has formed a basis for possible future collaboration and extending networks.
- The enthusiasm and quick response of my mentor.
- As an artist having the time and space to reflect and have conversations with a mentor.
- Open listening.

4.2.2.1 *Hierarchies within relationships*

Some artists felt uncomfortable with the apparent hierarchical 'labelling' which occurred from the outset with regard to perceived 'experience', and would have preferred an approach which enabled the pairings to relate to each other on a more equal footing:

> "Here we have two practitioners, labelled and boxed, for convenience, I assume. The experience? capability? exposure? professional success? is neatly package as "Experienced Artist" (and the emerging artist, as yet to be recognised, but as what?) It is the "value judgement" involved in the labelling process, which I find contentious. What seems to be ignored is experience, (surely the most valuable of attributes). Maybe, as a suggestion, the mentor and mentee should embark as equals, maybe as co-mentors."

4.2.3 Community of Practice is emergent, dynamic, highly personalised and often contradictory

A significant piece of learning to emerge from the project is the recognition that the 'community' of artists who participated in the project are probably as diverse, individualistic and idiosyncratic as the various 'communities' of participants whom they collectively serve. As a group of individuals, they came from many backgrounds and traditions, and the process of dialogue through mentoring / coaching as a means of supporting them to appreciate each other's perspective seemed particularly pertinent. Creating the space through training where different perspectives can be heard, accounted, challenged, rejected, celebrated and refined is essential to the ongoing development of the sector's ever-evolving 'community of practice', and we think it is a vital consideration to inform future training design, not just for the future of the ArtWorks project, but for the longer-term development of training in the sector. Conflicting perspectives, disagreements or differences of opinion should not be seen as fundamental weaknesses of the sector's workforce as a disparate set of practices and values, but rather celebrated as representing the diversity of the sector and its capacity to reconcile those differences through dialogue, listening to each other, and becoming involved in each other's artistic processes in a true spirit of collaboration.

4.2.4 Unexpected Outcomes

Participants also report a number of unexpected outcomes from the process:

4.2.4.1 Value of Mentoring

- Surprised by the extent to which being mentored has influenced me. It has been great!
- Sustaining relationships.
- Helped my 'shining core' working with my mentor.
- Meeting my mentor and the working relationship formed.
- I think I will have continuing contact with my mentor which I am delighted about. Also have met several colleagues who have suggested ideas/ future projects.
- having a mentor - someone to ask
- There was a time when I needed an unbiased mentor during this process and they were there! Thank you!
- Unexpected outcome in the experience of mentoring someone significantly older than myself – although this wasn't an issue, it has enhanced my range of mentoring skills.
- Generally – good feelings re the progress – mentorship definitely helps feeling better re own abilities.
- Through having my mentor sessions I feel a lot more confident, motivated and determined to achieve my ultimate goal as a ceramic artist.

4.2.4.2 Network of Artists

- Opportunities to collaborate.
- Great to meet with other artists. Nice to know people are in the same boat.
- I have met some very friendly and supportive people.
- The initial meetings with other established artist helped me realise how far I've come in such a short time.
- The networking opportunity with some of the best practicing artists in the region.
- Yes loads of spin offs connected with the richness of the conversations that took place.
- Finding 'common ground', having my opinions valued
- I made new friends and connections!
- Development of relationship with artist in another art form – possibly leading to collaboration.

4.2.4.3 Personal Benefits

- Lots! Lovely to give time to reflect on my practice together and separately. Having the strength to celebrate highs and lows with people and in practise. Feeling more confident.
- I had hoped the process would feed my own practice as an artist and how I think about participatory work. But the level to which I would explore was much deeper than I had envisaged.
- I have been focused to develop my own practice and it has helped me to develop my own idea / work.
- I'm off to university!
- Completely changed my direction, attitude and desire to work in the field (in a good way!).
- Graphics and perhaps an interesting understanding.
- Yes new areas thoughts on the development of approaches to p.a.
- Given me even more opportunity to reflect and extend my practice.
- Development of practice by sharing improvisation with someone from another art form.

- A change in perspective personally and revaluation of my own situation.
- The chance to reflect myself was crucial not just for my mentoring but for me too – it's not something I naturally do.
- Very confidence-giving - able to call myself 'an artist'
- Increased confidence.
- Great to come away from sessions feeling empowered to have made decisions for myself
- The answers come from us - hearing that from yourself is very rewarding
- Started volunteering in participatory art.
- Loads – can't list them all here – own practice – networks – lovely people.
- The emergence of more non-linear paths to achieving a goal

5 Recommendations

5.1 Critical Factors

The 'critical factors' which the participating artists identified at 4.1.1 should be accounted in future training design. In particular, we feel there is still some interesting debate to be had around the extent to which Participatory practice might be considered as an Artistic practice in and of itself, and the implications that has for artists' professional identity.

5.2 Processual knowledge should inform the design and structure of future learning

We suggest that training in Participatory Arts practice will be most effective when the training process is consistent with the practices themselves, in terms of creating the conditions for participants to:

- express themselves and have their 'voice' heard
- listen to other perspectives and
- reach new insights, learning and consensus through discussion, dialogue and debate.

We also think it is important to support the 'community' of Participatory Arts practice by creating opportunities for all members of that emergent and dynamic 'community' to learn from each other, through structured artist-led initiatives which share best practice and support the development of the skills needed to strengthen individual practice, and the broader skills development of the sector.

5.3 Further involvement of artists in future projects

Every effort should be made to involve the artists involved in the Peer Artists Learning project in future ArtWorks NE initiatives. As a group, they represent a very committed and engaged community of practitioners, who are passionate about the area of research which ArtWorks is focusing on. They represent a significant asset for the overall project, and their good will and commitment will be of real benefit in informing the future direction and implementation of the ArtWorks project regionally and nationally.

5.4 Co-mentoring opportunities over a longer period

Specifically, we think that a longer-term non-hierarchical co-mentoring project over a 12-18 month period would be welcomed by the artists who participated in the Peer Artist Learning project, as a means of reflecting on professional experiences to develop professional skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as helping us as a sector to discover more about our 'community of practice.'

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7   Appendices

7.1   Artist Pairings

'Emerging' Artist	Description	'Experienced' Artist	Description
Barrie West	Visual Arts / Collaborations	Lisa Matthews	writer /poet
Kevin Dowling	Photography MA	Virginia Kennedy	Dance and Drama artist
Amy Carter	installation artist	Karen Rann	
Joe Johnston	Community Music Trainee	Rebecca Pedlow	teach for Teesside University on the BSc Music Technology, and BA Creating Music Degrees
Christina Maiden	freelance drama facilitator	Richard W Hardwick	Writer
Ken Byers	New Media Artist and educator	Melanie Hani	Animation and Design
Meg Gennings	Theatre practitioner	Lesley Wood	education and drama practitioner
Jean Lowes	Visual Arts	Judith Thompson	Director of Arts Specialism at Hill Top School Specialist Arts College
Catherine Pickering	Glass and Ceramics	Judy Caplin	Ceramics
Neida Pearson	Visual Arts / Painting / Fabrics	Wendy Brookbanks	Textile artist
Brenda Watson	Visual Arts - colour, space and three-dimensional geometric forms	Annie Bromley	Creative Director
Eileen Woods	Lanscape paintings	Vicky Holbrough	Visual Artist
Chris Johnson	musician and project manager	Anne Curtis	Artist Practitioner, professional author, book illustrator and Creative Director of Shoo Fly
Mariam Rezai	community music trainee	Lindsay Duncanson	lens based media, but more recently working with experimental vocal performance
Anna Hall	Performance Artist	Sheree Mack	writer, artist and diverse arts project manager
Olivia Hayes	Dance / Choreography	Tracey West	Dance / Movement
Aaron Waters	Animation	Richard Broderick	Sculptor
Becky Inch	Animation	Tommy Anderson	Graphic Designer

7.2 Template for initial 'focused conversation' in phase 1

- Objective
    - How would you describe your participatory practice?
    - What are the important dates and events (chronology) in your development?
    - What methods or methodologies underpin your practice?
- Reflective
    - How do you reflect on your work?
    - What kinds of learning have been significant for you in your development? At which points of your development have they been most significant?
    - What have been the key /eureka moments / 'critical' factors in your own professional development?
    - What have been the key change agents and/or challenges?
    - What are the more general challenges within your own practice area? Or in the broader sector?
    - What particular projects (case studies) can you recall where you have had to adapt or refine your practice to account for challenges or barriers to success?
    - How important is your own artistic practice to your participatory practice? Do they inform each other, and if so, how?
- Interpretive
    - How do you account for your successful development as an artist working in participatory settings?
    - How have you learned to develop your participatory practice as an artist?
    - In your experience, what skills or qualities does one need in order to progress as an artist in participatory settings?
    - How important is formal accredited training in developing a participatory Arts practice?
    - How much weight do you attach to the value of your own self-reflection, against the reflections of others, in informing your practice?
    - Are there particular values which you think are commonly held among artists working in participatory settings?
    - What questions might you have asked yourself, or do you ask yourself, to enable deep reflection and move your practice forward?
    - What advice would you want to give an emerging artist working in participatory settings?
- Decisional
    - What questions would you want to ask an emerging artist working in participatory settings, which would help them identify positive strategies for their own development?

7.3   ArtWorks NE Research and Enquiry Questions

7.3.1   ArtWorks NE Research Question:

What is the progression in learning for students and emerging artists which will develop and establish their employability in relation to participatory settings? How can the value and status of employment in this field be promoted and raised among those with influence such as arts educators, arts leaders and managers, careers advisors and parents?

7.3.2   Supplementary Research Question for this strand of enquiry

How do artists learn to develop and what forms does this learning take over time?

7.3.3   ArtWorks NE Enquiry Questions:

- How do we develop a more professional and confident sector whose work and value is perceived as important and whose voice is stronger?
- How do we develop a better understanding of what constitutes quality in the work?
- How do we develop the infrastructure for the training and development of artists at all stages of their careers?
- What are the clear models of good practice that can be shared, disseminated and replicated?
- How do we bring about more joined up thinking across funding agencies and public bodies in relation to the workforce development issues implicit in the programme?
- How do we bring about a more developed provision across all art forms to help plug the gaps identified through our research?
- How do we bring about a major shift in the value and perception of the role of artists working in participatory settings?